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SUBJECT: GERMANS DOWNPLAY SUGGESTIONS OF SPLIT ON KOSOVO

Classified By: Political Counselor Jeffrey Rathke for reasons 1.4 (b) a
nd (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: German opinion on Kosovo is moving in the right direction. Recognizing the unlikelihood of a positive outcome to the Troika process, officials at the Chancellery and Foreign Office have underscored to us that they are working toward the broadest possible support within the EU for Kosovo independence in the absence of a new UNSC Resolution. Senior Chancellery officials have begun to prepare legislative opinion, engaging key Bundestag members on the unlikelihood of a UNSCR and the need for Germany to be a leader within Europe on the issue. Contrary to suspicions voiced in other EU capitals, we have heard unanimously that a split within Chancellor Merkel's Grand Coalition along party lines is not emerging. There is the possibility that some German politicians across the spectrum might be susceptible to last-minute gambits by Russia or Serbia to drag out the Troika process; however the Chancellery indicates it would oppose any proposals that could extend more than one month beyond the December 10 Troika report to the UN Secretary General. End summary.

¶2. (C) Recent reporting from Vienna and USEU suggests that a perception may be forming in some EU capitals that Germany could go wobbly on Kosovo because of differing views within the parties that make up Chancellor Merkel's Grand Coalition (CDU/CSU - SPD). We have explored this possibility with the Chancellery, Foreign Office, and senior staff in the CDU/CSU and SPD Bundestag caucuses (and also used the opportunity to encourage Germany to demonstrate to its EU partners its steadfastness). The response has been consistent across the board: denial that there is any substantive difference between the CDU/CSU and SPD on Kosovo. Comment: We consider this significant, since officials here often are quick to cite coalition difficulties to justify German reluctance to take bold foreign policy steps. We have heard this explanation often in response to our efforts to generate greater German contributions in Afghanistan, for example. End comment.

Chancellery Optimistic on EU's Ability to Act

¶3. (C) Chancellery senior-director-equivalent Norman Walter told us the German government fully expects the Troika process to fail. Walter said Germany wants it to be clear at the end of the process that the responsibility for failure is on the Serb and Russian side. He said that National Security Adviser Christoph Heusgen and others on the Chancellery staff have begun engaging members of the Bundestag (especially the Foreign Relations Committee) to prepare them for the likelihood that a UNSCR will not be achievable and that Germany, the EU, and NATO will have to find a way forward without one. According to Walter, the Foreign Relations Committee did not object to this message, which he said gives

him some optimism about the Bundestag's ability to support a flexible German/EU response to a unilateral declaration of independence.

¶4. (C) Walter said that, if the Troika process fails, Berlin would expect a prompt unilateral Kosvar declaration of independence following the December 10 report to the UNSYG. The Chancellery would expect U.S. recognition soon thereafter, followed by an EU response that might take days (hopefully not weeks, he said) to coordinate. The Chancellery is optimistic that a sufficient degree of unity can be achieved among the 27 to allow the EU to act decisively. Walter said Germany had heard from the Romanians recently that Bucharest would not block EU action (although Romania probably would not recognize Kosovo). Berlin expected the Slovaks to behave similarly, and Walter thought Spain would come around to that position. Greece and Cyprus would be the toughest nuts to crack, in his opinion.

¶5. (C) Walter said that, in the absence of a UNSCR, he expected the Bundestag to be less concerned with the politics of a unilateral declaration of independence than with the legal aspects of a continued German presence in Kosovo (NATO and EU). The absence of a UNSCR would encourage the Left Party to challenge the legality of German participation in KFOR before the Constitutional Court. Contacts on the SPD staff were more relaxed, however, telling us that they did not expect a UNSCR, that they anticipated a challenge in court, but that this did not shake the SPD's view of the issue.

No CDU - SPD Split, but Some Reluctance in All Camps

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¶6. (C) There are still doubts among a minority of legislators from both coalition partners, In particular, prominent SPD members Hans-Ulrich Klose and Gerd Weisskirchen reportedly are worried about the potential for violence after a unilateral declaration of independence. Such voices could spark a deeper debate about German and European policy in Kosovo, but at present SPD staff expect the caucus to coalesce in support of Foreign Minister Steinmeier (who is soon to ascend to the Deputy Chairmanship of the SPD).

¶7. (C) Some German politicians may be vulnerable to an 11th-hour attempt by Serbia or Russia to drag out the Troika process by putting tantalizing but vague ideas on the table close to the December 10 deadline. Hans-Joachim Falenski, senior foreign policy staffer in the CDU/CSU caucus, told us he thought deputy caucus leader Andreas Schockenhoff and others would feel obliged to allow more time to negotiate if a proposal were made that seemed remotely reasonable. We posed this scenario to Walter in the Chancellery, and he said Germany might be willing to entertain an additional thirty days of discussions if a plausible last-minute proposal were put on the table. But Germany would insist on a rapid conclusion and not allow discussion to drag out endlessly.

¶8. (C) Comment: Leaders in the German political establishment have not yet staked out a public position on how they would respond to the failure of the Troika talks or a unilateral declaration of independence, but it appears they are moving toward a position that will recognize independence and will work hard toward the greatest possible degree of EU solidarity.

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